

fortunate that will serve him well in his new role as Secretary of HUD.

Mr. Martinez most recently served as the county chairman of Orange County, FL. Prior to that, he served on the Orlando Housing Authority Board of Directors for 4 years, including 2 years as its chair in the mid-1980s. He served as vice president of Catholic Social Services in the Diocese in Orlando throughout the 1980s and as president of the Orlando Utilities Commission from 1994 to 1997 and as a lawyer in his own firm. He has served his community in many ways as a volunteer member of numerous organizations.

As chairman of the Orlando Housing Authority, Mr. Martinez worked with his colleagues on the board to pass a measure that took about \$1 million of reserve funds to build affordable housing for the elderly, as well as transitional housing for low-income single mothers. He consistently showed a willingness to meet and work with residents of public housing and other low-income residents of distressed neighborhoods in Orlando.

These efforts lead me to believe that as Secretary, Mr. Martinez will make every effort to make good on his promise "to work hard to ensure that every American has every opportunity to have affordable housing."

Last year, a number of bipartisan proposals providing for funding the construction of affordable housing were offered in the Congress. I look forward to working with the new Secretary on legislation that will help us achieve the lofty goal he has set out.

As many of my colleagues know, HUD has had a history of being a troubled agency. While many of its programs do a good job of providing decent homes to millions of poor and working families, it has proven to be a difficult department to manage.

In 1994, in fact, HUD was placed on the General Accounting Office's high-risk list, the only agency to be so listed. However, as a result of concentrated efforts by Secretary Cuomo and his top staff, the GAO announced last week that HUD is now off the high-risk list. HUD achieved this result by working tirelessly to correct the problems in financial oversight and procurement systems. It is widely recognized that Secretary Cuomo has devoted significant time and effort to address these managerial issues, and I commend him for his success.

This is by no means to say all of HUD's problems have been solved, but it does mean that Mr. Martinez will take over the Department with a management system in place that is moving HUD in the right direction. In his confirmation hearing, Mr. Martinez made it clear that he understood the progress that has been made while committing himself to continue the efforts to improve the operations of the Department.

I was also encouraged that Mr. Martinez recognized the importance of the Community Reinvestment Act in making housing opportunities more available to all Americans. Several committee hearings have established the fact that CRA is a crucial tool that is needed to make a number of other housing programs effective. The low-income housing tax credit, the community development block grant, and the HOME program all depend, to some extent, on bank credit made available largely because of the CRA.

Finally, I note that this nomination has the support of a wide range of housing groups. A number of letters of support have been sent to the committee which are part of the hearing record. Included among these supporters are a number of industry groups, public housing organizations, and others. I note in particular a very strong letter of support sent to us by our former colleague, Senator Mack, who has high praise for the nominee.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator Mack's letter be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of these remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, Mel Martinez understands the job ahead of him. He has committed to expanding housing opportunities for all Americans. I look forward to working with him, and I commend his nomination to my colleagues for their approval.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 16, 2001.

Hon. PAUL S. SARBANES,
*Chairman, Committee on Banking, Housing,
and Urban Affairs, Dirksen Building, U.S.
Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR CHAIRMAN SARBANES: As a former member of this committee, it is an honor and privilege to introduce my friend Mel Martinez, Secretary-designee of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

As a fellow Floridian, I have had the opportunity to know and personally work with Chairman Martinez in his various roles in local county government since the early days of my Senate career. I have found him to be an exceptional individual who has the intelligence, integrity and compassion to guide this agency and serve its constituents.

The Secretary-designee through his life experiences understands the courage, drive and determination it takes to achieve the American dream. As you and I know, very difficult problems can be overcome when individuals work together. Mel Martinez understands what it takes to bring people together with a deep concern for those who are less fortunate and striving for a better future. With his personal perspective and insight, I am sure you could not find a better person to improve the lives of those that look to us for assistance.

Therefore, with complete confidence, I strongly recommend Mel Martinez and urge your favorable consideration of him for Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Sincerely,

CONNIE MACK.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished majority leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Chair.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREE-
MENT—EXECUTIVE NOMINA-
TIONS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed en bloc to the consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar No. 7, Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget; Executive Calendar No. 8, Anthony Principi to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs; Executive Calendar No. 9, Melquiades Rafael Martinez to be Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I also ask unanimous consent that at 2:45 p.m. the Senate proceed to a vote on the nominations en bloc, and further, that one rollcall count for three votes with respect to the nominations. I further ask unanimous consent that the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table and the President be notified of the Senate's action.

I further ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of the nomination of Gov. Tommy Thompson, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the nomination, with the time on the nomination as follows: 60 minutes under the control of Senator WELLSTONE; 40 minutes for the chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee; 10 minutes under the control of Senator FEINGOLD; 10 minutes under the control of Senator KENNEDY; and that following the use or yielding back of time, the nomination be laid aside and the Senate proceed to a vote on the nomination at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, and following the confirmation, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, the President be notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, will the majority leader allow 10 minutes under my control, which may or may not be used, following that of Senator KENNEDY?

Mr. LOTT. I amend the UC to that effect: 10 minutes under the control of Senator REID following Senator KENNEDY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, let me reiterate, we will have the one vote now for the three nominees en bloc. We will then have time for debate on the nomination of Gov. Tommy Thompson to be Secretary of HHS. The next recorded vote will be at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday,

and we could have another vote or votes at that time on three additional nominees that will be ready to go at that time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATIONS OF MITCHELL E. DANIELS, JR., TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET; ANTHONY JOSEPH PRINCIPI, TO BE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS; AND MELQUIADES RAFAEL MARTINEZ, TO BE SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The legislative clerk read the nominations of Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget; Anthony Joseph Principi, of California, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and Melquiades Rafael Martinez, of Florida, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, Mel Martinez has a great story. He is a self-made man who is destined to do great things. At age 15 he fled Cuba during the airlift of children known as Operation Pedro Pan. Although, he was alone, he would soon begin his American Dream.

A graduate of Florida State University College of Law in 1973, Martinez joined an Orlando firm and practiced personal injury law. During his 25 years of law practice in Orlando, he was very involved in a variety of community activities. In 1984, he was appointed chairman of the Orlando Housing Authority by the mayor. He held this post for two years, later serving as president of the Orlando Utilities Commission.

He also served as Chairman of Governor Jeb Bush's Growth Management Commission, declaring a moratorium on new residential projects in already-crowded school districts.

In 1998, he was elected Orange County chairman. As the Chief Executive of a government, he was responsible for providing complete urban services to over 860,000 people. In this mayoral-like role, he advocated home ownership programs for low-income families and lowered property taxes. He concentrated on programs emphasizing public safety, growth management, the needs of children and families, clean neighborhoods, improved transportation, and the streamlining of government.

As Secretary of HUD, Mr. Martinez, assumes the \$30 billion budget, which faces a critical shortage of low-income properties and mid-income rentals. According to a recent HUD report, 5.4 million families pay more than 50 percent of their gross income for rent.

Mr. President, I believe that Mel Martinez will be a great asset for HUD. Because of his life story, he will be able

to handle the sensitive issues faced by this department. His story speaks for itself. From a child fleeing from Cuba, to a successful Chairman, he has created his success.

Mr. President, it is with honor that I support Mel Martinez as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to voice my strong support for the confirmation of Mel Martinez to be Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. I am impressed by his background and his commitment to providing safe, affordable housing to all Americans. Based on my review of the Mr. Martinez's record as a public official in Orlando and Orange County and his expressed dedication to the mission of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, I believe he will make a superb Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. I support his nomination and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mel Martinez has an extraordinary story. At the age of 15, he fled Castro's Cuba to come to the United States without his family. He stayed with a foster family for four years before the rest of his family could join him in Orlando. After earning a law degree from Florida State University, Mr. Martinez entered private practice, but also served on numerous public boards and committees. He served on the Board of Directors for the Orlando Public Housing Authority from 1982 to 1986. He was the Chair of the Orlando Affordable Housing Task Force in 1984, and President of the Orlando Utilities Commission from 1994 to 1997.

Since 1998, Mr. Martinez has served as the Chief Elected Official of Orange County, Florida. He has a reputation for championing "Smart Growth" and for understanding the need to ensure affordable housing for all citizens. He even established a commission to identify new ways to provide affordable housing.

Assuming that Mr. Martinez will be confirmed, he comes to HUD at a good time. Clearly, the nadir of HUD's existence was during the 1980s when the Department was riven by mismanagement and even worse. Jack Kemp deserves credit for his commitment to reform and improving housing opportunities for the people served by HUD. He worked hard and achieved significant progress.

The last eight years have seen a continuation of reform and a realization of many of the goals of reform. The homeownership rate is now the highest in history—67.7% of all American families, nearly seven out of every ten families, own their own home. Nine million households have been added to the ranks of homeowners since 1993. We've also seen record high levels of homeownership for urban-center African-American and Hispanic families. The

volume of Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans has doubled in recent years. FHA now has about 6.7 million mortgages in its portfolio. FHA has gone from a \$2.7 billion deficit to a current value of more than \$16 billion. HUD has also recognized the changing needs of our aging population by producing a Housing Security Plan for Older Americans.

HUD has made progress, but there is still much work to be done. There is still a pressing need to meet the continuing challenge of helping all Americans achieve the dream of homeownership and the promise first made over half a century ago in the National Housing Act: a safe and affordable place to live for all Americans.

One of the most troubling paradoxes of our recent prosperity is that despite the fact that incomes have risen for people in every income category, safe and affordable housing is more elusive than ever for many low- and moderate-income families. That is because the cost of housing has outpaced the increase in wages in many of our urban centers, including areas of Connecticut that now rank among some of the most expensive housing markets in the country.

We are losing public housing units in our country at an alarming rate. In some parts of the country, like the Northeast, the age of public housing units has necessitated the demolition of many units that have become too deteriorated to be rehabilitated. Federal policy has tried to provide public housing residents with housing vouchers, but frankly, there just aren't enough of those vouchers to go around. Further, in high-cost housing markets vouchers haven't always been useful to low-income families because they can't always find landlords who are willing to accept the vouchers. And even with vouchers, many find rent to be all but out of reach.

We need more vouchers. We also need to invest in capital maintenance, and rehabilitation funding to ensure that public housing units remain habitable. And if we have dilapidated public housing, then we need to put money into building replacement units. While vouchers work in some places under some circumstances, they don't work everywhere under all circumstances.

I also believe that the Federal government needs to think ahead to address issues that will arise as our elderly population continues to grow. We should consider creating tax and other incentives for construction of privately-owned assisted living units. The time has also come for HUD to consider developing new standards or approaches to ensure that senior citizens who live in public housing can stay in their homes and not be forced prematurely into expensive and less independent institutional care facilities.

These are not trivial matters. They are tough problems. But from what I